Update: Ongoing Inquiry into Melioidosis Illness at Tulane National Research Center

Late November 2014, two non-human primates in the breeding colony at the Tulane National Primate Research Center (TNPRC), a private research facility, became ill; one of the two was euthanized, the other one fully recovered. In mid- December 2014, samples submitted to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identified Burkholderia Pseudomallei as the causative agent. This strain of bacteria is not endemic in the US but was the subject of research at TNPRC. Because Burkholderia Pseudomallei is a tier 1 agent and the material was considered not in containment, the CDC and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) initiated a joint investigation of TNPRC in January 2015. As part of the investigation conducted January 20-24, federal and state scientists visited the TNPRC site to conduct epidemiological study and to review lab practices to determine possible route of transmission.

Recently, one of the investigators fell ill with unspecific symptoms. A blood test was conducted and test results from Friday, February 6th indicated a presence of antibodies in the blood indicating some exposure to BURKHOLDERIA PSEUDOMALLEI. The investigator was discharged from the hospital Sunday and she is no longer sick. The person's travel history does include a visit to a region that may have provided an opportunity for exposure. Federal and state agencies are aggressively trying to determine if the illness was related to the facility visit or past travel.

The other members of the investigative team are being tested for possible exposure to the bacteria for baseline comparison and possible future diagnosis. This testing will provide some indication regarding route of transmission.

The CDC, USDA and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), are working with Tulane University as well as state and local officials to identify, isolate, mitigate and prevent further transmission of BURKHOLDERIA PSEUDOMALLEI within TNPRC. Environmental testing, including air, water, soil sampling, will guide remediation activities. Once samples are collected, it will take 1-2 weeks to obtain results.

Situational Update: Wednesday, February 11, 2015, as of 2pm CST

EPA:

-3 air monitor samples were collected Tuesday and sent to CDC-Atlanta for examination. 3 more samples are scheduled to be shipped Wednesday.

-Soil samples were collected by Tulane from 35 different locations within the facility and sent to CDC-Atlanta for examination.

-Tulane staff and contractors are collecting soil samples from inside the two field cages that housed the primates. Samples will be shipped to CDC-Atlanta for examination.

CDC:

-CDC continue working with Tulane and state health officials to investigate how the two non-human primates may have contracted the bacteria. This investigation involves assessments of Tulane lab staff to determine if any may have been exposed to the bacteria and the observation of lab procedures to see if any could help inform the investigation.

-Examining samples collected at the facility. Some results will be made available to the state next week.

-An inventory review of select agents at the Tulane lab is being performed.

Tulane:

-Blood samples were drawn at the TNPRC today, under USDA supervision, from animals that are housed in the cages where the two infected animals were located.

-That procedure could not begin until the temperature rose above 50 degrees today.

-Those samples are also being sent to CDC-Atlanta for examination.

LA Department of Health and Hospitals:

-DHH coordinated the effort to catalog personnel for voluntary baseline blood sampling, which will provide comparison information for future testing.

-DHH completed the blood specimen collection on several individuals in accordance with CDC protocol.

Melioidosis, also called Whitmore's disease, is an infectious disease that can infect humans or animals and is treatable with antibiotics. The disease is caused by the bacterium *Burkholderia pseudomallei*.
It is predominately a disease of tropical climates, especially in Southeast Asia and northern Australia where it is widespread. The bacteria causing melioidosis are found in contaminated water and soil. It is spread to humans and animals through direct contact with the contaminated source. It is not known to spread from human to human or from animal to human.

CDC's role is to protect the health and safety of researchers and the public. For more information about melioidosis, visit http://www.cdc.gov/melioidosis/index.html. Questions regarding the investigation and remediation activities should be directed to CDC (Jason McDonald) at 404-387-3660. Questions regarding the TPNRC facility should be directed to Tulane (Mike Strecker) at 504-512-1347. All other questions or concerns should be directed to Mike Steele at Mike.Steele@La.gov .

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